



INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

(51) International Patent Classification 5 : A45C 3/02		(11) International Publication Number: WO 92/01403
		(43) International Publication Date: 6 February 1992 (06.02.92)
<p>(21) International Application Number: PCT/US91/05072</p> <p>(22) International Filing Date: 18 July 1991 (18.07.91)</p> <p>(30) Priority data: 555,317 19 July 1990 (19.07.90) US</p> <p>(71)(72) Applicants and Inventors: DAUPHIN, Alan, J. [US/US]; 33 Jamestown Road, Somers, CT 06071 (US). CHUDZIK, Nadia, A. [US/US]; 33 Mitchell Street, New Britain, CT 06053 (US).</p> <p>(74) Agent: LIBERT, Victor, E.; Law Office of Victor E. Libert, 965 Hopmeadow Street, P.O. Box 538, Simsbury, CT 06070-0538 (US).</p>		<p>(81) Designated States: AT (European patent), AU, BE (European patent), CA, CH (European patent), DE (European patent), DK (European patent), ES (European patent), FR (European patent), GB (European patent), GR (European patent), IT (European patent), JP, KR, LU (European patent), NL (European patent), SE (European patent).</p> <p>Published <i>With international search report. With amended claims and statement.</i></p>
<p>(54) Title: IMPROVED PORTFOLIO CASE</p> <img alt="A technical line drawing of an improved portfolio case (10). The case is shown in an open position, revealing its internal structure. It consists of two main shells, 12 and 14, which are hinged together. Inside, there are several portfolio leaves, 36, 38, 40, 42, 44, 46, and 48, which are mounted on a portfolio hinge means (50, 52, 54). The leaves are arranged in a stack and can be turned like the pages of a book. The case is designed to be fire-resistant and water-tight. Various parts are labeled with reference numerals such as 20, 20', 22, 22', 32, 34, 36, 36a, 36b, 36c, 38, 38a, 40, 40a, 40b, 40c, 42, 44, 46, 48, 50, 52, 54, 56, 58, 60, 62, 64, 66, 68, 70, 72, 74, 76, 78, 80, 82, 84, 86, 88, 90, 92, 94, 96, 98, 100, 102, 104, 106, 108, 110, 112, 114, 116, 118, 120, 122, 124, 126, 128, 130, 132, 134, 136, 138, 140, 142, 144, 146, 148, 150, 152, 154, 156, 158, 160, 162, 164, 166, 168, 170, 172, 174, 176, 178, 180, 182, 184, 186, 188, 190, 192, 194, 196, 198, 200, 202, 204, 206, 208, 210, 212, 214, 216, 218, 220, 222, 224, 226, 228, 230, 232, 234, 236, 238, 240, 242, 244, 246, 248, 250, 252, 254, 256, 258, 260, 262, 264, 266, 268, 270, 272, 274, 276, 278, 280, 282, 284, 286, 288, 290, 292, 294, 296, 298, 300, 302, 304, 306, 308, 310, 312, 314, 316, 318, 320, 322, 324, 326, 328, 330, 332, 334, 336, 338, 340, 342, 344, 346, 348, 350, 352, 354, 356, 358, 360, 362, 364, 366, 368, 370, 372, 374, 376, 378, 380, 382, 384, 386, 388, 390, 392, 394, 396, 398, 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+ It is not yet known for which States of the former Soviet Union any designation of the Soviet Union has effect.

IMPROVED PORTFOLIO CASE

Field Of The Invention

5 The present invention relates to portfolio cases, i.e., briefcases, attache cases and the like, and in particular to an improved portfolio case having particular utility for the organization and long-term storage of important documents.

Related Art

10 Generally, portfolio cases within which segregated folders are contained are well known in the art. For example, U.S. Patent 3,123,190 to L. Lifton shows an attache case having within it an expandable fan file defining a plurality of expandable compartments within the case. The fan file is designed to open in accordian-like fashion to provide access to the individual compartments, as best illustrated in Figures 10 and 11 of the patent. A somewhat similar construction is illustrated in U.S. Patent 1,889,765 to L. Switkes, as illustrated in Figures 1 and 3 of that patent. 20 In both constructions, a unitary fan fold file is affixed within the attache case and expands sufficiently to provide access to the individual compartments for the emplacement therein and withdrawal therefrom of papers and the like.

25 U.S. Patent 4,265,286 to George Rapoport discloses an arrangement which is similar to that of the above-noted Lifton and Switkes patents, but in which the fan file is removable from the case.

30 U.S. Patent 4,420,270 to Henry S. Rossello discloses a portfolio case within which is mounted a rigid display plate on which a loose-leaf ring binder is mounted. The board is arranged so that by drawing upon a pull strap 84 as shown in Figure 3 of the patent, the display plate is pivoted to an elevated position within the case to serve as an easel, as 35 illustrated in Figure 1 of the patent. The plurality of sheets of display material may then be turned on the ring binder to display individual sheets.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

In accordance with the present invention, there is provided an improvement in a portfolio case comprising a pair of rigid shells which cooperate to define a storage compartment. The shells have respective hinged walls which are joined by a case hinge about which the shells are pivotable relative to each other between a closed position and an open position in which the storage compartment is exposed. The portfolio case includes handle means attached to at least one of the shells, and the improvement is provided by the following structure. A plurality of portfolio leaves is mounted in a stacked storage position within at least one of the shells. The portfolio leaves are pivotally mounted by leaf hinge means which define a pivot axis located within its associated shell. At least one of the leaf hinge means and a portfolio leaf is directly attached to the shell. The portfolio leaves are dimensioned and configured to be enclosed in their stacked storage position within the portfolio case when the case is in its closed position. When the portfolio case is in its open position, the portfolio leaves are pivotable about the fixed axis defined by the leaf hinge means, between their stacked storage position and a position outwardly of their associated shell, in the manner in which the leaves, i.e., pages, of a book can be turned, thereby enabling individual selected portfolio leaves to be exposed.

In accordance with one aspect of the present invention, the portfolio case includes a first stack of portfolio leaves mounted in one of the shells by a first leaf hinge means and a second stack of portfolio leaves mounted in the other of the shells by a second leaf hinge means.

Another aspect of the present invention provides for the leaf hinge means to be fixed to the respective sides of their associated shells which are opposite to their respective hinge sides.

Yet another aspect of the present invention provides that the portfolio case is dimensioned and configured to en-

able it to stand upright on a flat horizontal surface, when the shells are in their open position, with the axis or axes of the leaf hinge means being disposed substantially vertically.

5 In still another aspect of the present invention, the portfolio leaves may be detachably mounted within their associated shell, whereby the portfolio leaves may be detached for removal from, and re-attached for insertion into, the portfolio case.

10 In yet another aspect of this invention, a base portfolio leaf among the plurality of portfolio leaves is attached to the associated shell, and the leaf hinge means is free to flex away from the shell.

15 In accordance with the present invention there is also provided a portfolio case comprising the following components, including a first shell and a second shell. Each of the shells has a base, a hinge wall opposite from a closure wall, and first and second opposite lateral walls extending between the hinge and closure walls at opposite ends thereof, the hinge walls, closure walls and lateral walls each having an exterior and an interior side. The first and second shells are connected to each other by a case hinge joining their respective hinge walls. In this way, the first and second shells are pivotable relative to each other about 20 the case hinge means between a closed position, in which the first and second shells cooperate to define between them a closed compartment, and an open position. The portfolio case also includes a plurality of portfolio leaves mounted by a leaf hinge means in a stacked storage position within 25 at least one of the first and second shells. The leaf hinge means define a pivot axis within its associated shell, and the portfolio leaves have outer faces which face in a direction outwardly of their associated shell and opposite-facing inner faces. The portfolio leaves are dimensioned and configured to be enclosed within the closed compartment defined by the first and second shells in their closed position, 30 and, when the first and second shells are in their open po-

sition, to pivot about the pivot axis defined by the leaf hinge means. The portfolio leaves are thus free to pivot between their stacked storage position and a position outwardly of their associated shell in the manner of the leaves 5 of a book, thereby enabling selected faces of individual ones of the portfolio leaves to be exposed.

As used herein and in the claims, "inner faces" of the portfolio leaves are those which face towards the base of the shells when mounted therein in their stacked storage position, and "outer faces" are those which face towards the 10 open side of the shells when mounted therein in their stacked storage position.

Other aspects of the present invention are described in the following detailed description of the invention and certain 15 embodiments thereof are shown in the appended drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1 is a perspective view of a portfolio case comprising one embodiment of the present invention, shown in 20 its closed position;

Figure 2 is a perspective view of the portfolio case of Figure 1 shown in its open position with some of the portfolio leaves pivoted outwardly of the case;

Figure 3 is a top plan view of the portfolio case of 25 Figure 2 with portions of the top lateral walls of the case broken away for improved clarity of illustration;

Figure 4 is a cross-sectional view, on an enlarged scale relative to Figure 3, of that portion of Figure 3 enclosed within the circle 4, but showing the portfolio leaves 30 in their stacked storage position;

Figure 4A is a view, on an enlarged scale relative to Figure 3, of that portion of Figure 3 enclosed within the circle A;

Figure 5 is a view corresponding to Figure 3 of a second 35 embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 6 is a view, on an enlarged scale relative to Figure 5, of that portion of Figure 5 enclosed within the

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circle 6, but showing the portfolio leaves in their stacked storage position;

Figure 6A is an exploded view, on a scale enlarged with respect to Figure 6, of that portion of Figure 6 enclosed

5 within the circle A;

Figure 7 is a cross-sectional view corresponding to that of Figure 4, but of a portfolio case according to another embodiment of the present invention having a particular type of flexible hinge; and

10 Figure 7A is a partial perspective view of the hinge of Figure 7.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION
AND SPECIFIC EMBODIMENTS THEREOF

15 Individuals as well as businesses have important documents such as wills, stocks and bonds, business records, deeds to property, patent documents and the like which are desirably kept in an organized manner to provide ready access to the documents. Such documents are usually stored in
20 file cabinets, desk drawers and the like. These provide convenient access at a single site but they are not convenient or efficient if the documents have to be taken to another location or removed in an emergency such as fire or flood. The present invention provides a convenient means of
25 permanently storing such records in an organized and physically protected fashion within a portfolio case, i.e., a briefcase or attaché case, which facilitates transporting the documents without loss of organization or physical protection.

30 Referring to Figure 1, there is shown a portfolio case generally indicated at 10 and comprising a first shell 12 and a second shell 14. First shell 12 has a handle 16 affixed thereto and a pair of conventional lock means 18a, 18b which serve to lock portfolio case 10 in the closed position
35 illustrated in Figure 1. The external construction of portfolio case 10 as shown in Figure 1 is conventional for portfolio case (or briefcase or attaché case) construction.

Identification plates or the like may be provided on the exterior of the portfolio case 10 to contain indicia identifying the owner of the portfolio case and/or its contents.

The portfolio case 10 may be made of a molded material such as a synthetic polymeric material, in which case shallow recesses may be provided as indicated at 19a, 19b and 19c in order to receive for mounting therein thin metal or plastic plates containing identifying indicia.

Referring now to Figures 1, 2 and 3, first shell 12 is seen to be of generally rectangular configuration having a peripheral wall which (as best seen in Figures 2 and 3) is comprised of top lateral wall 20 and bottom lateral wall 24 which are spaced apart and generally parallel to each other and extend between hinge wall 22 and closure wall 26. Hinge wall 22 and closure wall 26 extend generally parallel to, and are spaced apart from, each other. Shell 12 further comprises a base 28, the periphery of which is provided by walls 20, 22, 24 and 26 extending transversely from the periphery of base 28 to provide first shell 12 with an open side S (Figure 3) opposite its closed side defined by base 28.

Second shell 14 is, in the illustrated embodiment, of similar or substantially identical construction to first shell 12 and it therefore is not necessary to repeat a detailed description thereof, it being noted that the parts of second shell 14 are identically numbered to corresponding parts of first shell 12 except for the addition of a prime indicator. Thus, second shell 14 has a base 28' (Figure 3) from which walls 20', 22', 24' and 26' extend to provide an open side S' of second shell 14.

First shell 12 is joined to second shell 14 by a case hinge 32 (Figures 2 and 3) which connects the edges of hinge walls 22 and 22' to each other. Shells 12 and 14 accordingly are joined to each other for relative pivoting movement about case hinge 32 between the fully-closed position shown in Figure 1 and the fully-open position shown in Figure 3, including intermediate open positions, one of which is il-

lustrated in Figure 2. In Figure 3 it is seen that the planes of shells 12 and 14, i.e., the planes in which the respective bases 28 and 28' lie, are disposed substantially parallel to each other so that the planar angle between 5 bases 28 and 28' is about 180°. In the position illustrated in Figure 2, shells 12 and 14 are in an intermediate open position in which their respective bases 28 and 28' lie in planes disposed at an angle of less than 180° to each other, but substantially more than 90°, for example, at an angle of 10 about 120 to 175°. It will be observed from Figure 2 that even in an intermediate open position, i.e., with respective shells at a planar angle to each other of less than 180°, the open sides S and S' of shells 12 and 14, and the port- 15 folio leaves (described below) contained therein, are fully accessible to a user.

Referring now to Figures 2, 3 and 4, there is shown mounted within first shell 12 a first stack 34 of individual portfolio leaves 36, 38 and 40. In Figures 2 and 3, port- 20 folio leaves 36 and 38 are shown pivoted outwardly of their associated first shell 12 while portfolio leaf 40 is shown in its stacked storage position within first shell 12. Portfolio leaf 36 has (Figure 2) a plurality of pockets 36a, 36b and 36c (only partly visible in Figure 2) formed on the inner face 36i thereof in order to retain papers therein. 25 Additional pockets (not shown) may also be formed on the outer face 36t of portfolio leaf 36. Portfolio leaf 38 has a full-width pocket 38a formed on the inner face 38i thereof and may have a similar or differently configured pocket or other retainer means formed on the outer face 38t thereof. 30 Portfolio leaf 40, has on the outer face 40t thereof (Fig- ures 2 and 3), a retaining band 40a (Figure 2) which may be of elastic or similar configuration to hold a small article such as a cassette recording tape, as well as a pair of half-width pockets 40b and 40c which are adapted to hold 35 papers such as the folded sheaf of papers P shown in Figure 2. Pockets 40b and 40c include clear plastic label holders 41b and 41c into which a label may be inserted which serves

to identify the contents of those pockets. Obviously, any suitable arrangement of retaining bands, clips, pockets, etc. may be used.

A similar, second stack of portfolio leaves 34' is permanently mounted within second shell 14 and comprises (Figures 2 and 3) four portfolio leaves 42, 44, 46 and 48 which are provided with various sizes pockets, retaining bands, label holders and the like, including a flap-cover pocket 42a on the outer face 42t of portfolio leaf 42.

10 Each stack 34 and 34' of portfolio leaves is hinged to its associated shell in a manner as best seen with respect to stack 34' in Figure 4. As shown with respect to portfolio leaves 46 and 48, each portfolio leaf 36 through 48 inclusively terminates in a mounting strip 50 which, in cross-sectional profile, is disposed perpendicularly of the spine 52 of its associated portfolio leaf to provide a T-shaped configuration which facilitates securing each portfolio leaf 36-48 by means of mechanical fasteners 54 to its associated closure wall 26 or 26'. A decorative cover 15 56 may overlie the mounting strips 50 and the protruding heads of mechanical fasteners 54 to improve the aesthetic appearance of the portfolio case. The mounting strips 50, spines 52 and mechanical fasteners 54 cooperate to provide a leaf hinge means which, by virtue of the flexible connection 20 of spine 52 to mounting strip 50, enables pivoting movement of each individual portfolio leaf 36-48 between its stacked storage position (illustrated in Figure 4) within the storage compartment provided by its associated shell, and the outwardly pivoted position as shown with respect to portfolio leaves 36, 38, 42 and 44 in Figures 2 and 3. Obviously, any other fastening means could be used, such as a membrane adhesive tape fastener, electronic welding or the like, or any suitable combination thereof.

35 It will be appreciated that in use a wide variety of documents, cassette tapes, etc., may be stored within the various pockets, retaining clips, etc., on the individual portfolio leaves for storage and convenient transport of the

portfolio case. When it is desired to gain access to the materials contained within the case, the opened portfolio case may either be placed on edge in the upright position illustrated in Figure 2, or lain flat as described below.

5 Because of the construction of the portfolio case 10, including in the illustrated embodiment the flat configuration of the exterior surfaces of bottom lateral walls 24 and 24', the case 10 will stand upright and be stable, particularly when positioned in the less-than-fully-opened configuration

10 shown in Figure 2. Individual ones of portfolio leaves 36-48 may be accessed on either the inner or outer face thereof by pivoting one or more of the individual portfolio leaves outwardly of its associated shell 12 or 14 in the same manner as one would turn the pages of a book. Of

15 course, the opened portfolio case 10 may also be placed flat, that is, with bases 28 and 28' lying upon a table or other suitable support. Alternatively, it may be propped at any convenient viewing angle as one would prop up a book being read. All of these positions will provide access to

20 the individual portfolio leaves 36-48 by turning them as described above. In short, like a book, the portfolio case of the invention may be set on edge as in Figure 2, lain flat, or propped up for use.

It will be apparent that the portfolio case and the associated portfolio leaves may be made of any suitable material, whether vinyl or some other synthetic organic polymeric material, or leather or a combination thereof. Leather, silk, nylon or other natural or synthetic linings may be used to line the interior of the portfolio case to provide

25 an aesthetically pleasing appearance.

In one embodiment of the invention, which is preferred because it provides fire security for the contents of the portfolio case, the first and second shells may be made of any suitable fire-resistant material. Any known type of

30 fire-resistant construction may be utilized for the shells, including known layered constructions which include materials such as vermiculite or the like which expand and/or char

at high temperatures to absorb heat energy, thereby thermally insulating the contents of the portfolio against the high temperatures of a fire.

Alternatively, or in addition to being of fire-resistant construction, the portfolio case may be made of water-tight construction to protect it against the elements, chemicals and water dispensed by fire extinguishers and fire hoses, and against seepage if the portfolio case should be immersed in water as in a flood. For this purpose, a sealing means may be provided along the lips of one or both of first shell 12 and second shell 14. Referring to Figure 4, a groove 58 is formed within the peripheral lip of second shell 14 and a sealing gasket 60 made of a suitable compressible sealant material, such as silicone rubber, may be mounted throughout the entire length of the groove 58, which circumscribes the entire periphery of the lip framing open side S' of second shell 14. As shown in Figure 4A, a corresponding lip 62 is formed to project from the entire periphery of the edge of open side S of first shell 12. Lip 62 is complementary in shape to groove 58, so that it will fit therein when the portfolio case 10 is in the closed position illustrated in Figure 1. Lip 62 will compress sealing gasket 60 to thereby effectuate a water-tight seal of the closed compartment formed between first shell 12 and second shell 14 when in the closed position. Any other or additional suitable means of construction to enhance water tightness of the seal effectuated by closing the portfolio case 10 may of course be utilized.

In the embodiment of the invention illustrated in Figures 1-4, the portfolio leaves are permanently, i.e., non-removably, mounted within the shell. Figures 5, 6 and 6A of the drawings illustrate an alternate embodiment of the invention in which the individual portfolio leaves may be removed from the portfolio case. Parts of the portfolio case illustrated in Figures 5-6A which are similar or identical to the portions of the embodiment illustrated in Figures 1-4 are identically numbered thereto, except for the addition of

the numeral 1 at the beginning of the identifying numeral. Accordingly, Figure 5 shows a portfolio case 110 comprising a first shell 112 and a second shell 114. The exterior details of construction of the portfolio case 110 are substantially identical to those of portfolio case 10, so that Figure 1 could as well serve to illustrate the embodiment of Figures 5, 6 and 6A in its closed position.

Referring now to Figures 5, 6 and 6A, first shell 112 comprises a base 128 from which extends a peripheral wall 10 comprised of a top lateral wall 120, a bottom lateral wall 124, a hinged wall 122 and a closure wall 126. Second shell 114 is of similar construction to first shell 112 and parts thereof are identically numbered as the corresponding parts of first shell 112, except for the addition of a prime indicator thereto. Since shells 112 and 114 are similar to shells 12 and 14 of Figures 1-4A, it is not necessary to repeat a detailed description of shells 112 and 114. As in the case of portfolio case 10 illustrated in Figures 1-4A, a first stack 134 of portfolio leaves is mounted within first shell 112 and a second stack 134' of portfolio leaves is mounted within second shell 114. The first stack 134 is comprised of portfolio leaves 136, 138 and 140 and the second stack 134' is comprised of portfolio leaves 142, 144, 146 and 148. Generally, these are of similar or identical construction to the corresponding portfolio leaves described with respect to the embodiment of Figures 1-4A, except that the mounting strips 150 associated therewith are each faced, as best seen in Figure 6A, with a strip of gripping material 59, such as a component of a loop-and-hook fabric fastener of the type sold under the trademark VELCRO®. The interior side of closure wall 126 is faced with a complementary strip 61 of such fastening material. In this manner, each of the individual ones of portfolio leaves 136-148 may be conveniently emplaced within or removed from its associated shell 112 or 114. Any other suitable means which permit convenient mounting and de-mounting of the portfolio leaves in the shells 112 and 114 may of course be used.

An alternative embodiment of the invention utilizes a particular preferred form of hinge construction which is shown in Figure 7, in a view similar to that of Figure 4. In this embodiment, a stack of portfolio leaves 34'' is 5 mounted in base 28'' and is comprised of leaves 70, 72 and 74. Leaves 70 and 72 are hingeably attached to hinge strip 76. Hinge strip 76 is a flat, flexible ribbed strip of plastic which includes integral, parallel supporting ribs 78 for reinforcement. Hinge strip 76 extends between portfolio 10 leaf 74 and outer portfolio leaf 70 at edge 84. Leaf 74 is a base leaf bound at edge 82 to base 28'' by any suitable means such as glue or a plurality of double-sided adhesive tape strips 73. In this embodiment, only base portfolio leaf 74 is bound to base 28''; hinge strip 76 is not attached to base 28'' at all but is free to flex away from 15 base 28'' to allow the portfolio to be opened more fully for more convenient access to the documents therein. Intermediate leaf 72 is secured to hinge strip 76 by laminate strip 80. Laminate strip 80 is attached to intermediate leaf 72 at edge 81, and is laminated to hinge strip 76 so that it extends beyond edge 84 of hinge strip 76 and is bound at least one point to outer leaf 70. Additional intermediate leaves may be added, each having a laminate strip laminated 20 to the preceding laminate strip 80 and preferably extending to outer leaf 70. In such case, laminate strips 80 will be 25 layered one over the other at their ends extending to outer leaf 70.

30 Edges 82 and 84 of hinge strip 76 are bifurcated, having split edges 86a and 86b, Figure 7A. The split edge 82 is adapted to receive base leaf 74 and split edge 81 to receive leaf 70, to facilitate the attachment of the leaves to the hinge strip. Hinge strip 76 and the outer covering of the portfolio leaves may advantageously be made of the same plastic (synthetic polymeric) material, as this facilitates 35 securing the edges 86a, 86b of the hinge strip and the edge 81 of the intermediate strip to the respective leaves by conventional heat sealing or other techniques. Thus, the

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hinge strip 76, laminate strip 80 and the covers of the portfolio leaves are advantageously made of a thermoplastic material such as polyvinyl chloride. Any method of heat sealing may be used including the direct application of heat

5 via, e.g., an electrical resistive element, or sonic welding or by laser beam welding. Alternatively, or in addition, adhesive or mechanical fasteners may be used. These methods may also be used to laminate laminate strip 80 to hinge strip 76 as discussed above.

10 In any of the illustrated embodiments of the invention, one or both of the shells could be made somewhat deeper, or one or more of the illustrated individual portfolio leaves could be omitted, in order to leave room within the portfolio case for material in addition to the hinge-mounted stack

15 of portfolio leaves and materials carried therein. For example, room could be left for a looseleaf binder, ledger or other notebook which may conveniently be sized to fit within one of the shells atop the stack of portfolio leaves stored in that shell. Such binder or other notebook would be re-

20 moved from the portfolio case in order to provide access to the portfolio leaves disposed beneath it. Alternatively, the portfolio case may be sized such that one or more of such binders or notebooks or other materials may be carried in one shell which may optionally be free of any portfolio

25 leaves, with the portfolio leaves mounted only in the other shell. Of course, one of the shells may comprise a simple cover for the other shell and could be flat with no or very shallow peripheral walls. However, for a portfolio case of given overall depth, it is preferred to provide a portfolio

30 leaf storage compartment in each shell inasmuch as such construction, by dividing the total of portfolio leaves between two shells, provides fewer portfolio leaves in a given stack of leaves and thereby facilitates gaining access to all leaves.

35 Any suitable configuration of the pockets, retaining clips, etc., of the individual portfolio leaves may be utilized to provide a storage system tailored for specific

needs. For example, and by way of illustration only, the portfolio leaves may be configured to provide individually tailored storage for an individual's important financial and legal documents. Thus, the various pockets and retaining 5 clips may be designed to contain one or more last wills and testaments, insurance policies, pension plans and group benefit plans, auto insurance policies and identification cards, automobile or other vehicle titles, mortgage deeds and loan agreements, passports, bank and saving institution 10 passbooks, birth certificates, social security cards, safe deposit box keys, individual retirement account and annuity plans and the like, stocks and bonds certificates, financial statements, a list of next of kin or other persons to be notified in case of emergency or death, one or more tape 15 cassettes containing recorded instructions, family messages or the like, written instructions, photographs to identify jewelry or other property for insurance purposes and the like, or any other items of like import. In addition, the portfolio case may accommodate a binder or other book containing such items. 20

The portfolio leaves and any binders utilized may also serve, and be specifically designed, to accommodate tax returns, business plans, corporation kits including corporate minute books and the like, sales presentation kits, etc. In 25 short, the portfolio case of the invention may be used for any specific combination of important documents or other small items which it is desired to keep in organized condition in a convenient transportable container, which may optionally be fire-resistant, and/or chemical resistant and 30 water-tight, and which may be conveniently transported and easily used to provide immediate and convenient access to its contents.

While the invention has been described in detail with 35 respect to specific embodiments thereof, it will be apparent that, upon a reading and understanding of the foregoing, numerous alterations and variations thereto may occur to those

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skilled in the art. It is intended to include all such variations and alterations within the spirit and scope of the appended claims.

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THE CLAIMS

What it claimed is:

1. In a portfolio case comprising a pair of rigid shells which cooperate to define a storage compartment, the shells having respective hinged walls joined by a case hinge about which the shells are pivotable relative to each other between a closed position and an open position in which the storage compartment is exposed, the portfolio case including handle means attached to at least one of the shells, the improvement comprising:

a plurality of portfolio leaves mounted in a stacked storage position within at least one of the shells, the portfolio leaves being pivotally mounted by leaf hinge means defining a pivot axis located within its associated shell with at least one of (a) the hinge means and (b) a portfolio leaf being attached to the shell, the portfolio leaves being dimensioned and configured to be enclosed in their stacked storage position within the portfolio case when the case is in its closed position and, when the portfolio case is in its open position, to be pivotable about the pivot axis defined by the leaf hinge means between the stacked storage position of the leaves and a position outwardly of their associated shell in the manner of leaves of a book, thereby enabling individual selected portfolio leaves to be exposed.

2. The portfolio case of claim 1 including a first stack of portfolio leaves mounted in one of the shells by a first leaf hinge means and a second stack of portfolio leaves mounted in the other of the shells by a second leaf hinge means.

3. The portfolio case of claim 2 wherein the leaf hinge means are fixed to the respective sides of their associated shells which are opposite to their respective hinge

sides.

4. The portfolio case of claim 3 wherein the shells further comprise respective closure walls spaced from and opposite to the hinge walls, and the leaf hinge means are fixed to the interior sides of the closure walls of their associated shells.

5. The portfolio case of claim 1 dimensioned and configured to enable the portfolio case to stand upright on a flat horizontal surface with the axis or axes of the leaf hinge means disposed substantially vertically, when the shells are in their open position.

6. A portfolio case comprising:

(a) a first shell and a second shell, each having a base, a hinge wall opposite from a closure wall, and first and second opposite lateral walls extending between the hinge and closure walls at opposite ends thereof, the hinge walls, closure walls and lateral walls each having an exterior and an interior side, and the first and second shells being connected to each other by a case hinge means joining their respective hinge walls whereby the first and second shells are pivotable relative to each other about the case hinge means between (i) a closed position in which the first and second shells cooperate to define between them a closed compartment, and (ii) an open position; and

(b) a plurality of portfolio leaves mounted in a stacked storage position within at least one of the first and second shells, the portfolio leaves being pivotally mounted by leaf hinge means defining a pivot axis within its associated shell with at least one of the leaf hinge means and a portfolio leaf being attached to the shell, and the portfolio leaves having outer faces which face in a direction outwardly of their associated shell and opposite-facing inner faces, and being dimensioned and configured to be enclosed within the closed compartment defined by the first

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and second shells in their closed position, and, when the first and second shells are in their open position, to pivot about the fixed axis defined by the leaf hinge means between their stacked storage position and a position outwardly of their associated shell in the manner of the leaves of a book, thereby enabling selected faces of individual ones of the portfolio leaves to be exposed.

7. The portfolio case of claim 6 including a first stack of portfolio leaves mounted in the first shell and a second stack of portfolio leaves mounted in the second shell.

8. The portfolio case of claim 7 wherein the leaf hinge means are fixed to the interior sides of the closure walls of their associated shells.

9. The portfolio case of claim 6, claim 7 or claim 8 wherein at least the exterior sides of the second lateral walls are dimensioned and configured to enable the portfolio case to stand upright on a flat horizontal surface on which the exterior surfaces of the second lateral sides are placed, with the axis defined by the case hinge means being disposed substantially vertically.

10. The portfolio case of claim 9 wherein the leaf hinge means are dimensioned and configured to define a fixed axis which is disposed substantially parallel to the axis defined by the case hinge means.

11. The portfolio case of claim 6 further including a handle means affixed to at least one of the shells.

12. The portfolio case of claim 1, claim 2, claim 6 or claim 7 wherein the portfolio leaves are detachably mounted within their associated shell, whereby the portfolio leaves may be detached for removal from, and re-attached for inser-

tion into, the portfolio case.

13. The portfolio case of claim 1 or claim 6 wherein the shells are of fire-resistant construction.

14. The portfolio case of claim 1 or claim 6 wherein the shells are dimensioned and configured to form, in their closed position, a water-tight compartment.

15. The portfolio case of claim 14 wherein the first and second shells include sealing lips dimensioned and configured to engage each other in water-tight engagement when the shells are in their closed position.

16. The portfolio case of claim 1 or claim 6 wherein the plurality of portfolio leaves comprises a base portfolio leaf affixed to the shell and wherein the leaf hinge means is free to flex away from the shell.

AMENDED CLAIMS

[received by the International Bureau
on 18 December 1991 (18.12.91);
original claim 3 cancelled;
original claims 1,4-6 amended;
other claims unchanged (4 pages)]

5 1. In a portfolio case comprising a pair of rigid shells which cooperate to define a storage compartment, the shells having respective hinged walls joined by a case hinge about which the shells are pivotable relative to each other between a closed position and an open position in which the 10 storage compartment is exposed, the portfolio case including handle means attached to at least one of the shells, the improvement comprising:

 a plurality of portfolio leaves mounted in a stacked storage position within at least one of the shells, 15 the portfolio leaves being pivotally mounted by leaf hinge means within the associated shell, the hinge means defining a pivot axis located within its associated shell with at least one of (a) the hinge means and (b) a base portfolio leaf being attached to the shell, the leaf hinge means being 20 disposed proximate to the side of the associated shell which is opposite to the hinge side of the associated shell, the portfolio leaves being dimensioned and configured to be enclosed in their stacked storage position within the portfolio case when the case is in its closed position and, when 25 the portfolio case is in its open position, to be pivotable about the pivot axis defined by the leaf hinge means between the stacked storage position of the leaves and a position outwardly of their associated shell in the manner of leaves of a book, thereby enabling individual selected portfolio 30 leaves to be exposed.

 2. The portfolio case of claim 1 including a first stack of portfolio leaves mounted in one of the shells by a first leaf hinge means and a second stack of portfolio 35 leaves mounted in the other of the shells by a second leaf hinge means.

3. (cancelled).

4. The portfolio case of claim 1 wherein the shells further comprise respective closure walls spaced from and 5 opposite to the hinge walls, and the leaf hinge means are fixed to the interior sides of the closure walls of their associated shells.

5. The portfolio case of claim 1 dimensioned and con-10 figured to enable the portfolio case to stand upright on a flat horizontal surface with the axis of each leaf hinge means disposed substantially vertically, when the shells are in their open position.

15 6. A portfolio case comprising:

(a) a first shell and a second shell, each having a base, a hinge wall opposite from a closure wall, and first and second opposite lateral walls extending between the hinge and closure walls at opposite ends thereof, the hinge 20 walls, closure walls and lateral walls each having an exterior and an interior side, and the first and second shells being connected to each other by a case hinge means joining their respective hinge walls whereby the first and second shells are pivotable relative to each other about the case 25 hinge means between (i) a closed position in which the first and second shells cooperate to define between them a closed compartment, and (ii) an open position; and

(b) a plurality of portfolio leaves mounted in a stacked storage position within at least one of the first 30 and second shells, the portfolio leaves being pivotally mounted by leaf hinge means within the associated shell, the leaf hinge means defining a pivot axis within its associated shell with at least one of the leaf hinge means and a base portfolio leaf being attached to the shell, the leaf hinge 35 means being disposed proximate to the side of the associated shell which is opposite to the hinge side of the associated shell, and the portfolio leaves having outer faces which

face in a direction outwardly of their associated shell and opposite-facing inner faces, and being dimensioned and configured to be enclosed within the closed compartment defined by the first and second shells in their closed position,

5 and, when the first and second shells are in their open position, to pivot about the fixed axis defined by the leaf hinge means between their stacked storage position and a position outwardly of their associated shell in the manner of the leaves of a book, thereby enabling selected faces of

10 individual ones of the portfolio leaves to be exposed.

7. The portfolio case of claim 6 including a first stack of portfolio leaves mounted in the first shell and a second stack of portfolio leaves mounted in the second

15 shell.

8. The portfolio case of claim 7 wherein the leaf hinge means are fixed to the interior sides of the closure walls of their associated shells.

20 9. The portfolio case of claim 6, claim 7 or claim 8 wherein at least the exterior sides of the second lateral walls are dimensioned and configured to enable the portfolio case to stand upright on a flat horizontal surface on which

25 the exterior surfaces of the second lateral sides are placed, with the axis defined by the case hinge means being disposed substantially vertically.

10. The portfolio case of claim 9 wherein the leaf hinge means are dimensioned and configured to define a fixed axis which is disposed substantially parallel to the axis defined by the case hinge means.

30 11. The portfolio case of claim 6 further including a handle means affixed to at least one of the shells.

35 12. The portfolio case of claim 1, claim 2, claim 6 or

claim 7 wherein the portfolio leaves are detachably mounted within their associated shell, whereby the portfolio leaves may be detached for removal from, and re-attached for insertion into, the portfolio case.

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13. The portfolio case of claim 1 or claim 6 wherein the shells are of fire-resistant construction.

14. The portfolio case of claim 1 or claim 6 wherein 10 the shells are dimensioned and configured to form, in their closed position, a water-tight compartment.

15. The portfolio case of claim 14 wherein the first and second shells include sealing lips dimensioned and 15 configured to engage each other in water-tight engagement when the shells are in their closed position.

16. The portfolio case of claim 1 or claim 6 wherein the plurality of portfolio leaves comprises a base portfolio 20 leaf affixed to the shell and wherein the leaf hinge means is free to flex away from the shell.

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STATEMENT UNDER ARTICLE 19

The claims have been amended to specify, in claims 1, 2 and 4-16, that the leaf hinge means are disposed within the associated shell, that the leaf hinge means define the pivot axis, and that the leaf hinge means are disposed proximate to the side of the associated shell which is opposite to the hinge side of the associated shell.

Independent claims 1 and 6 are amended.

Claim 3 is cancelled.

Claim 4 is amended to depend from claim 1.

Claim 5 is amended to delete from line 3 "or axes of the" and to insert therefor --of each--.

Claims 2 and 7-16 are unchanged.

The amended claims define an improved portfolio having a plurality of leaves mounted by hinge means within an associated shell with at least one of the leaf hinge means and a base portfolio leaf being attached to the shell and with the leaf hinge means being disposed proximate to the side of the associated shell which is opposite to the hinge side of the associated shell. None of the cited references appear to disclose that type of structure.

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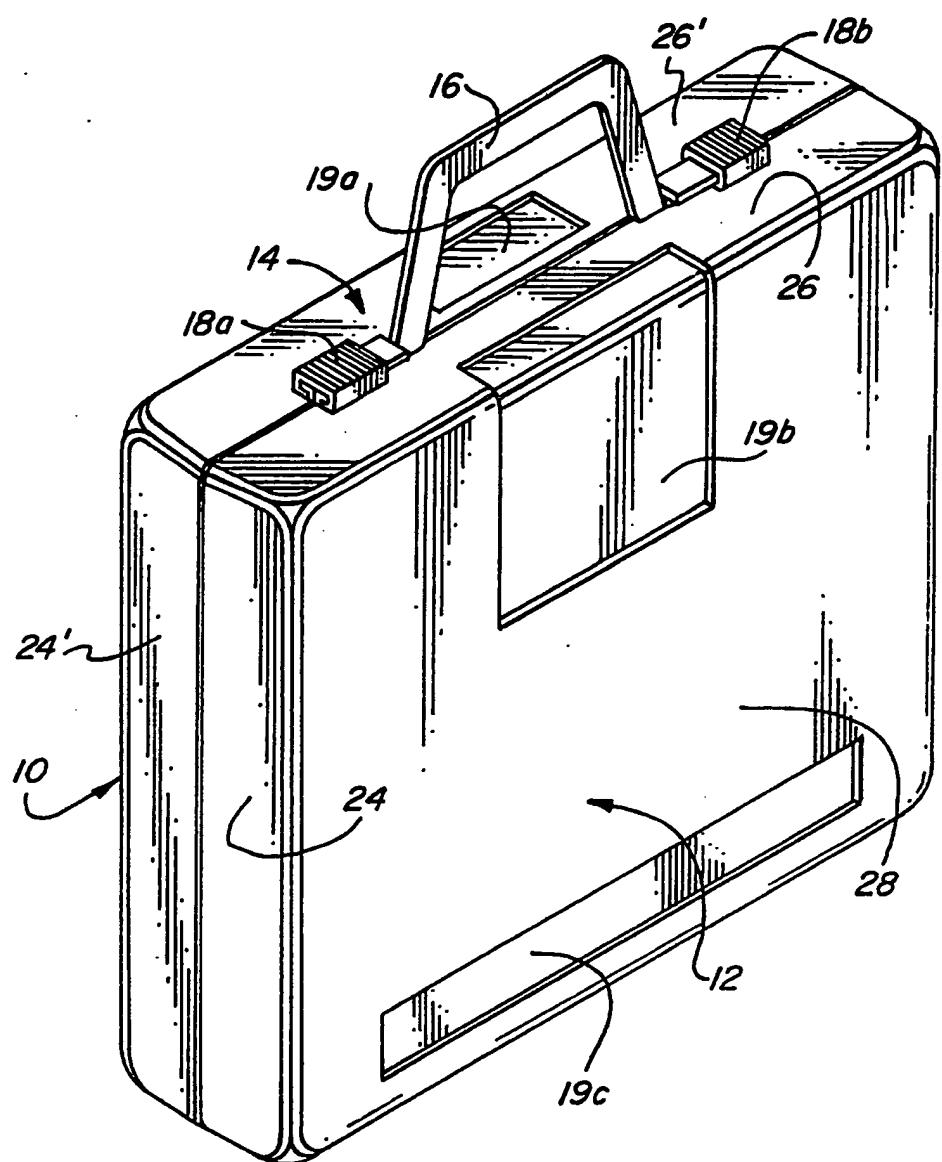
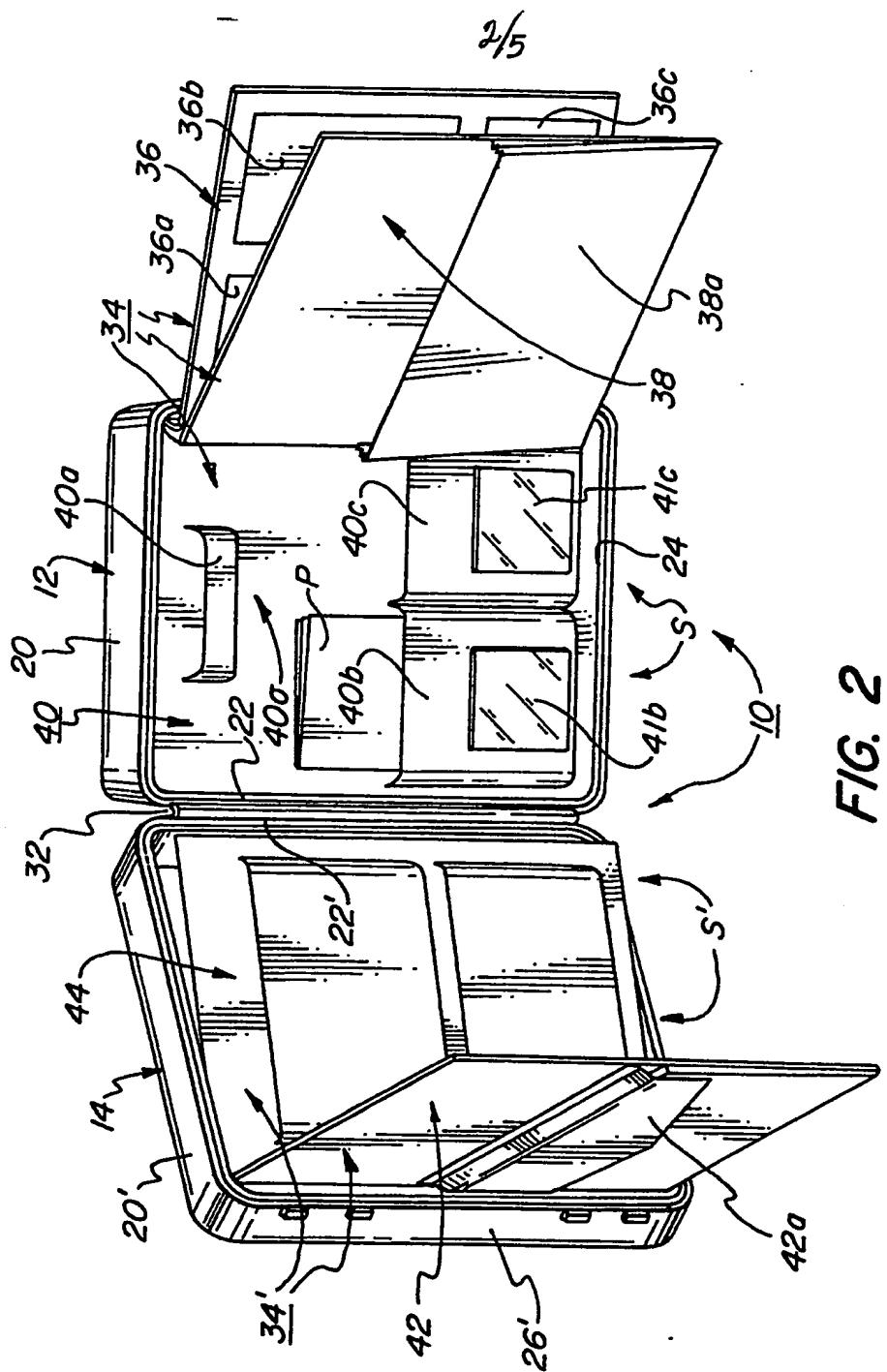
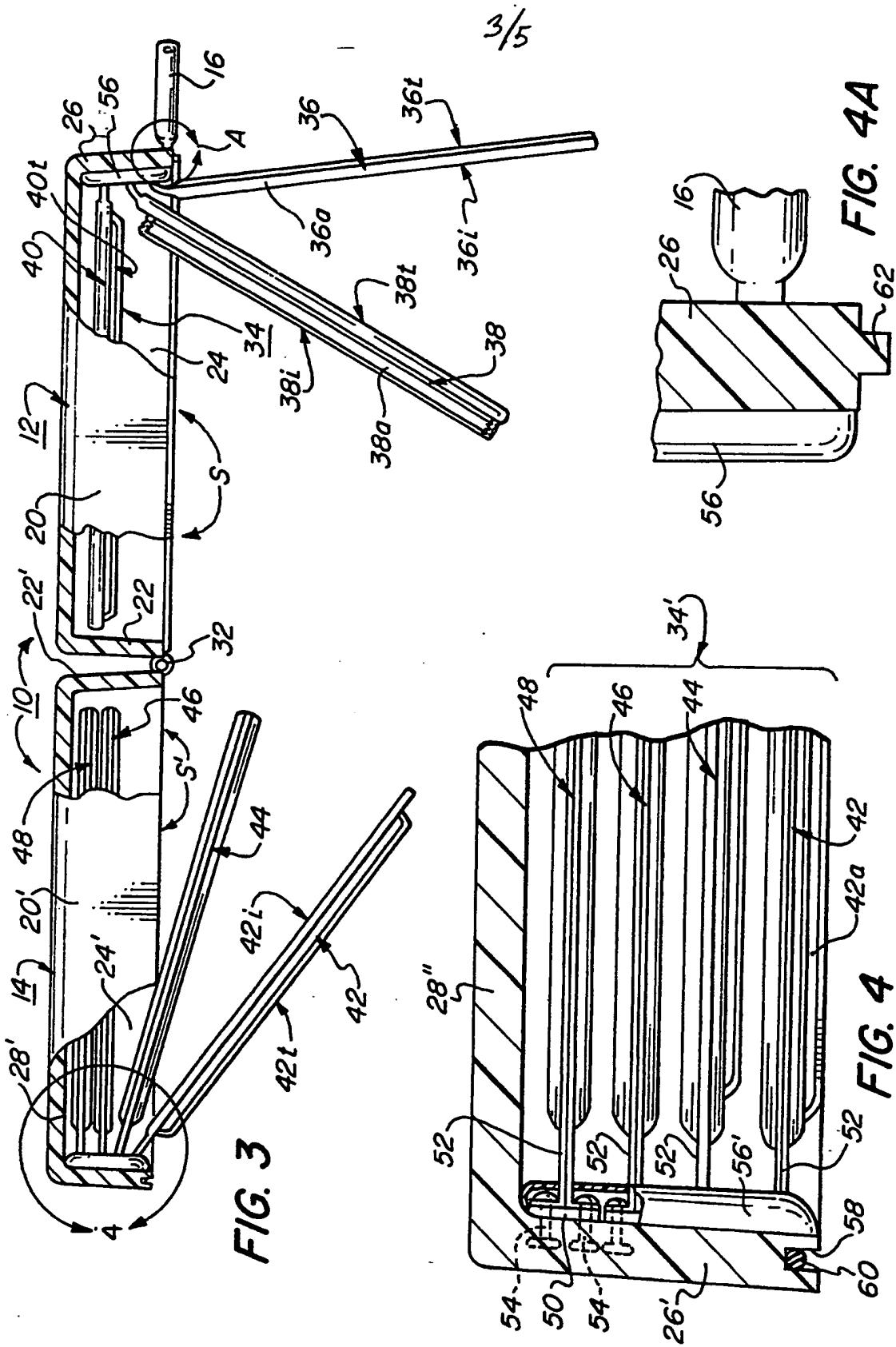
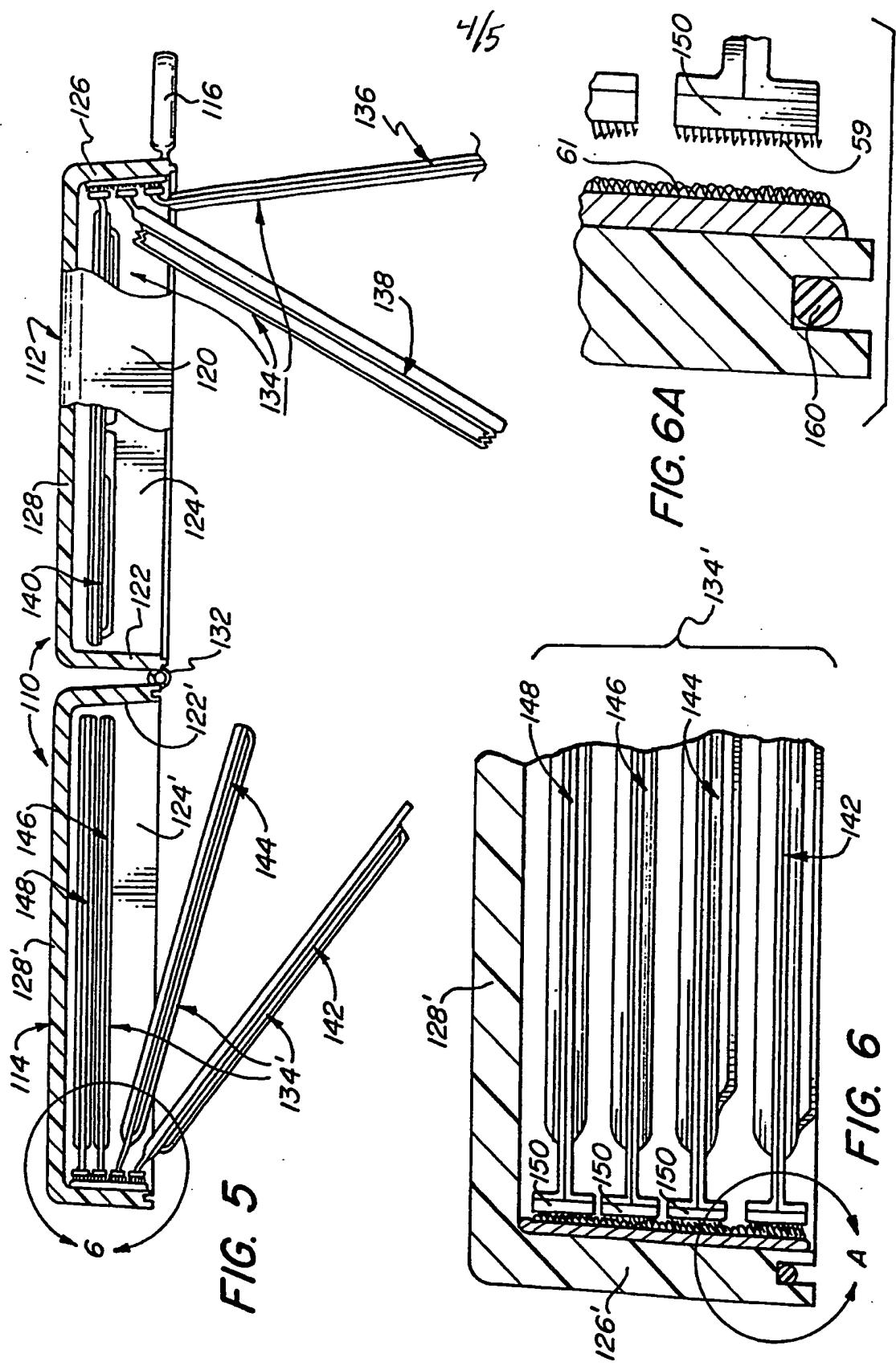


FIG. 1







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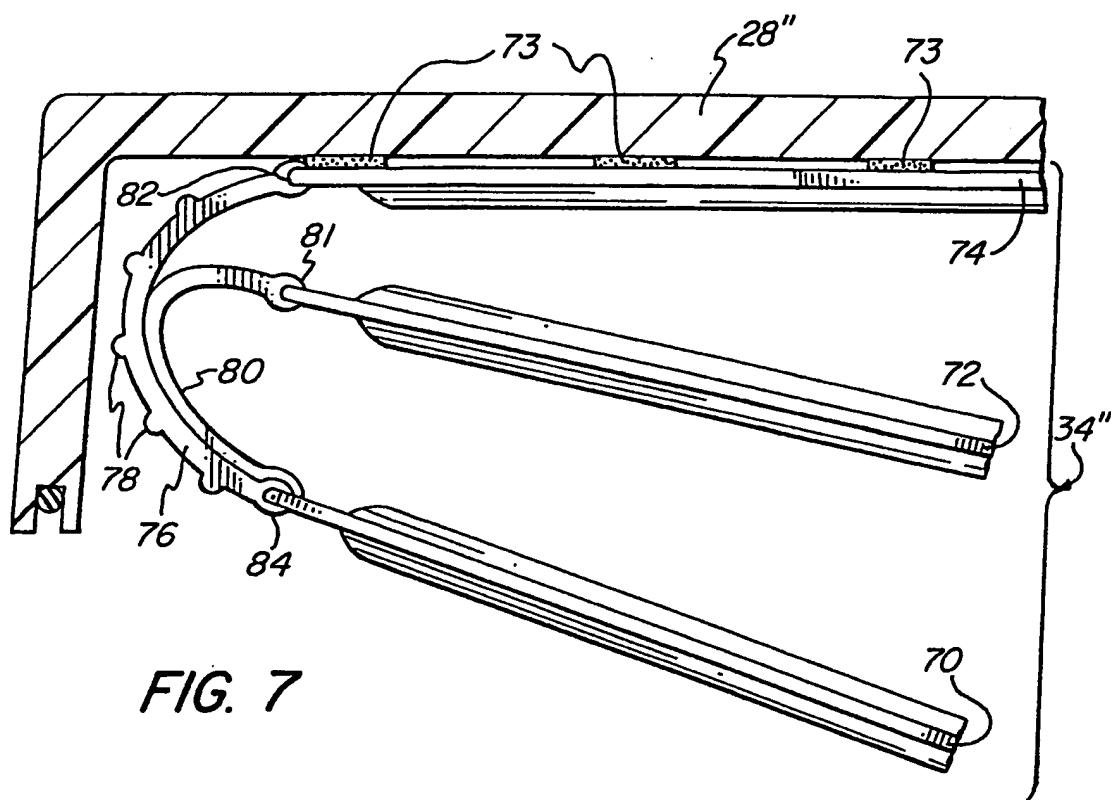


FIG. 7

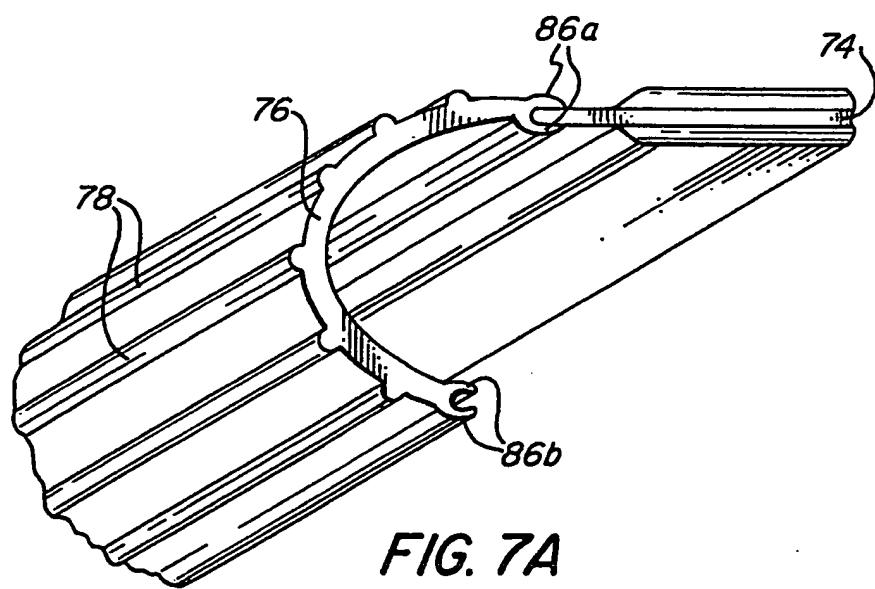


FIG. 7A

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No.

PCT/US91/05072

I. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER (if several classification symbols apply, indicate all) *

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both National Classification and IPC

IPC(5): A45C 3/02

US CL.: 190/109

II. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum Documentation Searched 7

Classification System	Classification Symbols
US	190/102,109,110,900,901,902; 206/44B; 281/16,45; 402/4,7,73,75,76

Documentation Searched other than Minimum Documentation
to the Extent that such Documents are Included in the Fields Searched 8

III. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT *

Category *	Citation of Document, ¹¹ with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages ¹²	Relevant to Claim No. ¹³
X Y	GB, A, 2,203,097 (SHEPHEARD-WALWYN) 12 October 1988 See page 3, lines 2-7.	1,2,5-7,9-12 14,15 3,4,8-10,13, 16
Y	US, A, 3,136,082 (SLOVIES) 09 June 1964 See col. 2, lines 38-40.	3,4,8-10
Y	US, A, 1,204,387 (AKANS) 14 November 1916 See page 1, lines 29 and 30.	13
Y	US, A, 3,250,549 (SCHADE) 10 May 1966 See col. 1, line 72 - col. 2, line 2.	16
A	US, A, 1,603,538 (HELFER) 19 October 1926	
A	US, A, 1,889,765 (SWITKES) 06 December 1932	
A	US, A, 3,1123,190 (LIFTON) 03 March 1964	
A	US, A, 4,265,286 (RAPORT) 05 May 1981	
A	US, A, 4,294,558 (ERRICHIETTO) 13 October 1981	

* Special categories of cited documents: ¹⁰

- "A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance
- "E" earlier document but published on or after the international filing date
- "L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)
- "O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means
- "P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed

"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention

"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step

"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art

"A" document member of the same patent family

IV. CERTIFICATION

Date of the Actual Completion of the International Search

16 SEPTEMBER 1991

Date of Mailing of this International Search Report

30 SEP 1991

International Searching Authority

ISA/US

Signature of Authorized Officer

Stephen Garbe

III. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT (CONTINUED FROM THE SECOND SHEET)

Category	Citation of Document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant-to Claim No.
A	US, A, ,4420,270 (RUSSELLO) 13 December 1983	
A	US, A, 4,444,148 (GOLDSTEIN) 24 April 1984	
A	US, A, 4,681,474 (WIBERG) 21 July 1987	